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## ON THE ORDER OF THE CANTERBURY TALES: CAXTON'S TWO EDITIONS

When William Caxton printed his second edition of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, he prefixed to it a brief but famous "Prohemye," in which he tells the story of its origin. He had printed the first edition, he says, believing the copy which he used to be true and correct, not knowing that it was one of those which "wryters haue abrygyd it and many thynges left out / And in some places haue sette certayn versys / that he neuer made ne sette in hys booke." But some unknown "gentylman," having made Caxton aware of these defects, offered him the loan of a true copy, according to Chaucer's "owen first book," in consequence of which Caxton set again to work, and delivered from the press, some six years after his earlier edition, a copy of the *Canterbury Tales* which he says he had "dylygently ouersene and duly examyned to thende that it may be made accordyng vnto his [Chaucer's] owen makyng."

Full appreciation of the way in which Caxton performed his self-imposed task is possible when parallel reprints of the two texts, the earlier and the later, shall lie before us, and not until then. But, failing that comparison, some general notes on the differences between the two editions may demonstrate, not only the marked divergences of the second from the first, but also the impossibility of discussing the relations of the manuscripts and prints of the *Canterbury Tales* on the limited body of evidence yet before us.

I have used for this comparison the Caxtons owned by the British Museum, the first edition from the Royal Library, the second from the Grenville collection. The former is  $10\frac{3}{4} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$  inches, of 372 leaves, 29 lines to the full page; the second is  $10\frac{1}{8} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$  inches, of 312 leaves, 38 lines to the full page. A manuscript note by Grenville, affixed to the fly-leaf of his copy, states that he had had the twenty-one leaves missing from his

volume facsimiled from the perfect copy in St. John's College, Oxford, at heavy expense.

The superficial appearance of the page in the two editions presents marked differences. In Caxton II the stanzaic poems are well spaced (except "Sir Thopas"); the headings and colophons are also spaced and mark off distinctly the divisions between tales; and running-titles throughout, as well as signatures in the lower recto, give the book a practical usable clearness not seen in Caxton I. Caxton I is without these features; the division between tales is noted, but the line or two of "Here endeth . . . And foloweth . . ." is merely inset, not spaced so as to catch the eye. Both editions have small black directors, over which are printed the somewhat rude and thinly colored red capitals at the beginning of tales and of important paragraphs. The second edition is adorned with woodcuts<sup>1</sup> of the pilgrims, at the beginning of each tale and before the corresponding section of the Prologue; not the least interesting of these is one, in the Prologue, representing the pilgrims seated at a round table<sup>2</sup> presided over by the Host, who has at his right hand a man with a feather in his cap, evidently the Knight, and at his left a woman in a high pointed headdress. There are twenty-four people at the table.

Neither edition has title-page, place, or date. The second has the "Prohemye" before the Prologue, with Caxton's name at its close. Both conclude with the Retractation, after the Parson's tale.

In indicating the textual differences of the two Caxtons, I have used a tabular form to show the arrangement of tales in each; and a second table gives the number of lines in each tale, with subjoined notes on important points.

<sup>1</sup> See the Bibliographical Society's *Transactions*, Vol. VI, face p. 38, for woodcut of the Shipman and a few lines from this Caxton; in Pollard's *Early Illustrated Books* (1893), p. 222, and in Garnett and Gosse's *English Literature*, Vol. I, p. 152, is reproduced, reduced, the page bearing the cut of the Canon's Yeoman. See also Dibdin, *Typographical Antiquities*, Vol. I, p. 300; and the woodcut of the Squire in Duff's *William Caxton*, to face p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> This cut, according to Pollard, *loc. cit.*, p. 225, was afterward used by de Worde in Lydgate's *Assembly of the Gods*. It is reproduced in Simonds' *Student's History of English Literature* and in Mather's edition of *The Prologue, the Knight's Tale*, etc.

TABLE I  
THE ORDER OF THE TALES

SKEAT	CAXTON I	CAXTON II	SKEAT
A.....	{ Knight Miller Reeve Cook	{ Knight..... Miller..... Reeve..... Cook.....	A
B <sup>1</sup> .....	Man of Law	Man of Law.....	B <sup>1</sup>
F <sup>1</sup> .....	Squire	Merchant.....	E <sup>2</sup>
E <sup>2</sup> .....	Merchant	Squire.....	F
		Franklin.....	
D.....	{ Wife of Bath Friar Summoner	{ Wife of Bath..... Friar..... Summoner.....	D
E <sup>1</sup> .....	Clerk	Clerk.....	E <sup>1</sup>
F <sup>2</sup> .....	Franklin		
G.....	{ Second Nun Canon's Yeoman	{ Second Nun..... Canon's Yeoman.....	G
C.....	{ Doctor Pardoner	{ Doctor..... Pardoner.....	C
B <sup>2</sup> .....	{ Shipman Prioress Sir Thopas Melibeus Monk Nun's Priest	{ Shipman..... Prioress..... Sir Thopas..... Melibeus..... Monk..... Nun's Priest.....	B <sup>2</sup>
H.....	Manciple	Manciple.....	H
I.....	Parson	Parson.....	I

According to Professor Skeat's note on the arrangement of the Tales,<sup>1</sup> there are four leading types among the manuscripts, as follows:

I. A, B<sup>1</sup>, D, E, F, C, B<sup>2</sup>, G, H, I.

This is Tyrwhitt's order, and is found in the Ellesmere and related texts. In the opinion of Henry Bradshaw,<sup>2</sup> this arrangement of tales, accompanied by other peculiarities discussed below, was "the result of editorial supervision exercised after Chaucer's death." To Professor Skeat, however, this arrangement appears the only Chaucerian one, though neither in the

<sup>1</sup> *Oxford Chaucer*, Vol. IV, Introduction.

<sup>2</sup> *Collected Papers*, p. 104.

*Academy* for 1891, Vol. II, p. 96, nor in the *Oxford Chaucer* does he give his reasons for so asserting.

II. A, B<sup>1</sup>, D, E, F, G, C, B<sup>2</sup>, H, I.

Seen, for example, in MS Harley 7334. According to Bradshaw, this type seems "the most authentic."

III. A, B<sup>1</sup>, F<sup>1</sup>, D, E, F<sup>2</sup>, G, C, B<sup>2</sup>, H, I.

Seen, for example, in MS Lansdowne 851. This type was not treated separately by Bradshaw.

IV. A, B<sup>1</sup>, F<sup>1</sup>, E<sup>2</sup>, D, E<sup>1</sup>, F<sup>2</sup>, G, C, B<sup>2</sup>, H, I.

Seen, for example, in MS Harley 7333. Caxton I shows this order.

It has long been recognized that the original form in which the *Canterbury Tales* were circulated, perhaps that in which they were worked upon by Chaucer himself, was fascicular, booklike, and in several or many parts. Only in this way can we explain the systematic confusion which we find in the manuscripts, and only in this way can we imagine Chaucer as working over an unfinished poem of such character and scope. In this connection two manuscripts in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge—R. 3, 19 and R. 3, 21—are suggestive. These volumes, written for the most part in one and the same hand, are composed of fascicules or booklets of from eight to forty leaves, which were numbered by the scribe before he began to write. The soiled condition of the first and the last pages, and the existence, at the end of several fascicules, of numbered blank leaves, show that these booklets were used separately and later combined into a volume; and the breaking of two fascicules in the codex R. 3, 19, plainly to be seen from the old numbering, illustrates how a fragment of the *Canterbury Tales* could have been split by some early bookmaker. We may also note such stanzaic displacements as are found in the Fairfax and in the Harley texts of "La belle dame sans merci," explained by Professor Skeat,<sup>1</sup> the similar confusion of leaves in the "Testament of Love,"<sup>2</sup> and the displacement in the "Romaunt of the Rose."<sup>3</sup> The confusion by tens in the stanzas of the "Letter of Cupid" as contained in the codices Fairfax 16, Bodley 638, Tanner 346, and Digby 181—a group of Chaucerian codices upon which I am at present engaged—points, with the other instances

<sup>1</sup> *Chaucerian and Other Pieces*, p. liv.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xx.

<sup>3</sup> See *Notes and Queries*, Vol. I (1894), p. 446.

given, to a kind of separability in some early manuscripts, either by folios or by fascicules, which only can account for the disarrangements in their descendants.

Doubtless some facts of this sort were in the mind of Professor Skeat when he disposed of his types III and IV as arising from the "fundamental" or Ellesmere type by "splitting;" and yet it requires more than this simple hypothesis to account for conditions existing in the principal manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales*. Take, for example, one of the most conspicuous differences among the manuscripts, that at the close of the Man of Law's tale. In the Ellesmere type the link after the Man of Law is cut out, the D group (Wife of Bath-Friar-Sompnour) following; this link is in Harley 7334 used to introduce the Sompnour, the same group following as in the Ellesmere; in Harley 7333 and some twenty other manuscripts this link binds the Man of Law's tale to the Squire's; and in one manuscript alone, the Selden, it introduces the Shipman, whose tale directly follows—an arrangement which recommended itself to Bradshaw and to modern editors. In the varying versions of this link, that is, the difference consists in the name which stands in line 17—sometimes "Sompnour," sometimes "Squyer," in one manuscript "Shipman."

It is noticeable in all these varieties that the pilgrim who is introduced at this juncture bears a name beginning with *S*, noticeable especially when we remember that nearly all the company has still to speak. The question suggests itself whether the name in the Man of Law's end-link could have been deleted by Chaucer in a working copy, the *S* alone remaining legible, so that the word was read in various ways by later scribes. Being but scribes, they naturally altered the sequence of tales to correspond.

Such a conjecture opens a plausible explanation for the differences among the manuscripts at this point. The inappropriate union between the B' fragment and the Squire's tale, the inappropriate language put into the mouth of the Squire in the B' end-link, would be due to the misreading of the half-illegible word as "Squyer"; and the excision of the entire link from the Ellesmere group (speaking in terms of Bradshaw's theory) would be not unnatural, inasmuch as the link either contained no legible

name, or agreed with Harley 7334 in introducing the Sompnour, whose tale does not immediately follow. The conditions in Harley 7334 are of especial interest, not only because of the great value of this enigmatic codex, but because of the opinion of ten Brink<sup>1</sup> that Chaucer had the Sompnour in view at this point. And we must notice that in at least two other manuscripts, Royal 17 D xv and Rawl. Poet. 223, the link reads "Sompnour," though the Squire's tale follows. These latter cases may possibly be explained as contaminations; the B<sup>1</sup> fascicule, with its end-link, might have been transcribed from the Harley 7334 type, and copying continued from a manuscript having the Squire's tale next, no change of name being made by the scribe. Harley 7334 would then appear to us, in this respect as well as in so many others, as the representative of a working copy.

One manuscript only, the Selden, shows a bond between Man of Law and Shipman. No attention is paid by editors to its arrangement otherwise; the allusion to Rochester which the fragment headed by the Shipman contains (in the Monk's prologue) naturally promotes it to a position above the D fragment with its mention of Sittingbourne, ten miles farther from London; and Bradshaw, by assuming that the Man of Law's end-link was the Shipman's prologue, obtained a second confirmation for his "lift" of the Shipman, etc. fragment up to B<sup>1</sup> in the agreement of the Man of Law's "thrifty" (prologue, l. 46) with the Host's "thrifty" in the Shipman's prologue. Surely, however, the variations seen in the manuscripts after the Man of Law's tale—variations confined to the introduction of an S-pilgrim—go to show that the Man of Law's end-link is in truth an end-link; in which case the use of the word "thrifty" in both the prologue and the epilogue would have nothing to do with the order of the tales.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *History of English Literature*, Vol. II, p. 160.

<sup>2</sup> This explanation is, of course, directly at variance with the statements of Skeat, *Oxford Chaucer*, Vol. IV, p. 418. But anyone who assumes, with Professor Skeat, that the Man of Law's end-link, now called the Shipman's prologue, was intended by Chaucer as a prologue, is under obligation to explain how that prologue came to be separated from its tale and placed before another to which it had no applicability, the Squire's; also to explain how three manuscripts, one of them of antiquity and authority, obtain the name "Sompnour" at this point; and also to explain the coincidence that all three of these names—"Shipman," "Squier," "Sompnour"—begin with S and are of much the same length.

The geographical fitness of the position now given B<sup>2</sup> is the main argument of modern editors for their deviation from the order in all sound manuscripts. But to accept this arrangement as Chaucer's, we must make very extensive assumptions. In the first place, we must assume that in this respect, and only in this respect, the Selden manuscript is authoritative; that its muddled arrangement otherwise<sup>1</sup> is error and its arrangement here truth; that the sequence Man of Law-Shipman does not come from a misreading like that which put the Squire after the Man of Law, but from Chaucer's own copy. In the second place, we must assume that, although the feminine pronouns of the Shipman's tale, the promise of the Man of Law to speak in prose, the second Nun's terming herself an unworthy "sone of Eve," etc., were inconsistencies to be filed out later, the time and place allusions of the links are all correct and final; that Chaucer could not, for instance, have planned his Monk and Nun's Priest as a separate piece of work, with a partially written head-link placing his Monk at Rochester, the most important stage of the journey, and then have connected the bit with B<sup>2</sup> without revision. And all this turns upon the third, and fundamental, assumption of most students, except ten Brink: that the *Canterbury Tales* are a torso, a vertebral column from which some of the bones are missing, but with the remaining parts duly proportioned to fit a conception of the whole which was clearly sketched in the author's mind.

Yet the counter-assumption is equally defensible, that the *Canterbury Tales* are not a torso; that the fragments contain contradictions which do not permit of their organic union; and that the "Chaucerian" order of the tales exists more clearly in our imaginations than it did in Chaucer's. Certainly, in discussing that order, the condition of the manuscripts deserves more attention than it has yet received. It may well be that no amount of comparative study will enable us to discover one ultimate type of arrangement; but some explanation of the differences among existing types we may reasonably look for; and that explanation will lie at the basis of any sound classification of the manuscripts of the *Tales*.

<sup>1</sup> See Chaucer Society *Trial Tables*, with Part I of the *Six-Text*.



Of the several classifications or preliminary classifications which have been made, that by Bradshaw and the less thorough one by Skeat are based in part upon the order of the tales in the manuscripts; but Bradshaw indicated other tests necessary toward a grouping, which Professor Skeat has not carried out. The elaborate scheme drawn out by Liddell on the results of Zupitza,<sup>1</sup> and that by Koch in his recent edition of the Pardoner's prologue and tale, are based solely upon the text conditions in a part of one fascicule—a test which can by no means be regarded as final.

In default of that critical comparison of the entire mass of evidence which lies in the future, a tentative classification of the manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales* may be founded upon these data: The order of the tales in every manuscript, accompanied necessarily by notes explaining whether that order be the original one, or whether the book shows signs of displacement; general notes upon the state of the text in every manuscript, with especial attention, as Bradshaw required, to the links; minute notes upon the state of the text in some few portions of the work—portions taken preferably from different fascicules. A classification not relying upon all these sorts of evidence must be regarded as unconvincing. The remark of the *Athenæum* reviewer<sup>2</sup> when discussing Liddell's "critical" text of the General Prologue, is pertinent here, that a critical text which assumes the correctness of Zupitza's classification of the manuscripts of the Pardoner's tale, and assumes also the applicability of that classification to the Prologue, takes positions which are not beyond dispute.

In this connection, it is instructive to compare Professor Koch's derivation of the later Caxton from Caxton I, based upon the text conditions of the Pardoner's tale in the two prints, with the conditions of the two Caxtons as wholes. To illustrate this, I present two groups of facts, notes upon some of the points which Bradshaw selected as tests, and a brief survey of minor textual details.

Bradshaw's points were, in part: the treatment of the Squire's head-link and end-link, of the Merchant's head-link, the stanza

<sup>1</sup> See Chaucer Society *Specimens*, etc., Part IV, p. xlviii.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. II. (1901), p. 598.

arrangement at the end of the Clerk's tale, the position of the "modern instances" in the Monk's tale, the position of the G fragment, and the presence or absence of "Gamelyn."

There is no tale of Gamelyn in either Caxton.

The G fragment in both Caxtons precedes C and B<sup>2</sup>.

Neither Caxton has any prologue to the present Shipman's tale; in Caxton I that "prologue" is used to connect Man of Law and Squire, as in Skeat's Class IV, Bradshaw's Class I. In Caxton II this link also introduces the Squire, but the Merchant's tale (E<sup>2</sup>) has been inserted between Man of Law and Squire.

In both Caxtons the Merchant's prologue begins, "Weping and wayling," etc.; that is, it opens with the line appropriate for connection with the close of the Clerk's epilogue, though it does not follow the Clerk's tale in either Caxton. The tale of the Clerk ends, in both Caxtons, with the line, "And lat hem care and wepe and wringe and waille;" that is, with the line ready for connection with the Merchant; but in both Caxtons the stanza of the "Verba Hospitis" appears after this envoy.<sup>1</sup>

In Caxton I the Franklin's prologue is as in the *Oxford Chaucer*, Vol. IV, p. 426, and the preceding "Words" of the Franklin to the Squire do not appear; in Caxton II these "Words" are present, and the fusion of the F group is thus complete. There is no "false" fusion of Squire and Merchant in Caxton I; and, as remarked, the close of the Clerk's tale is in both editions adapted for the sequence of the Merchant's. It is thus possible to regard the position of the Merchant's tale in Caxton II as due to fascicular displacement, especially as in this second edition the end-link connection Man of Law-Squire also appears, broken by the intrusion of the Merchant's tale. But as Caxton II shows the completed Squire-Franklin group, it possibly derives from a later working form of the poet's manuscript, in that fascicule at least, though retaining the erroneous union Man of Law-Squire. May we then infer, from these conditions in the two Caxtons, that the group Clerk-Merchant was arranged by Chaucer before that of Squire-Franklin was completed? The difference in the position of the Merchant in the two Caxtons could then be accounted for by supposing that in the archetype of Caxton I the Man of Law and the Squire formed one fascicule; while in that of Caxton II they did not, and the intrusion of the Merchant booklet between them was thus possible.

In Caxton I the Monk's tale is minus the tragedies of Adam, Peter of Spain, and Peter of Cyprus; in Caxton II the tragedy of Adam is in its place as seen, e. g., in Skeat's edition; but the two Peters are inserted

<sup>1</sup> See *Oxford Chaucer*, Vol. IV, p. 424.

between Cæsar and Croesus, not between Zenobia and Nero, in which latter position we find, in both Caxtons, the tragedies of Barnabo and Ugolino. The interruption to the Monk is in Caxton I made by the Host, and the lines (5-24) belonging to the Knight do not appear; in Caxton II the interruption is by the Knight, seconded by the Host, as in modern editions. Shall we deduce from this that Chaucer made another improvement in his plan at this point, or is this one of the abridgments of Caxton I mentioned in the "prohemye"?

To summarize. We have in both Caxtons an original order A B<sup>1</sup> F<sup>1</sup>, disarranged in Caxton II; in both Caxtons we have the sequence G C B<sup>2</sup> H I; in both Caxtons the D group is complete; in both Caxtons E<sup>1</sup> and E<sup>2</sup> are complementary, though the fascicules are separated; and in Caxton II, as opposed to Caxton I, we have a completed F group. Now, judging, as I must at this distance, from the scattered data afforded by the Chaucer Society, there seem to be at least two main groups in the class of manuscripts which append the Squire's tale to that of the Man of Law, as do the Caxtons. One of these classes has no "Words of the Franklin to the Squire," has the Merchant's prologue and tale next after the Squire's tale, and the tale of the Franklin lying next to that of the Clerk. The other class, though also showing superficially the order F<sup>1</sup> E<sup>2</sup>, has the "Words of the Franklin" at the close of the Squire's tale, with the word "Merchant" substituted for "Franklin" to make the link fit the next ensuing tale. Such a distinction illustrates with force the justice of Bradshaw's insistence that Chaucer's own tale, the links framing all the separate narratives, is the essential thing in determining the classes of the manuscripts; it illustrates also the opinion of ten Brink that in the earlier stages of the *Canterbury Tales* the four tales of Clerk, Merchant, Squire, and Franklin represented four separate fragments, at a later stage formed into a definite whole.

The relation of Caxton II to this second class is hard to determine. A manuscript showing this peculiarity—the "Words of the Franklin" added, but forced upon the Merchant, whose tale follows—may have been originally like the other class described, and have obtained later access to an F<sup>1</sup> fascicule from which it took the "Words," easily inserting them into the blank space which many manuscripts leave after the Squire's tale; the change

of "Franklin" to "Merchant" could then suggest itself to any reader who noticed that the Merchant's tale came next. As the manuscript back of Caxton II had its Merchant's tale displaced, and its F fused, no question arose.

TABLE II

	CAX- TON I	CAX- TON II	SKEAT		CAX- TON I	CAX- TON II	SKEAT
The Prologue—				Rime of Sir Thopas	197#	204#	207
Prelude .....	42	42	42	Link .....	48	48	48
Knight .....	36	36	36	Melibeus .....	...	...	...
Squire .....	22	22	22	Link .....	102	102	102
Yeoman .....	17	17	17	Monk's Tale .....	744#	776	776
Prioress .....	48#	47	47	Link .....	34#	54	54
Monk .....	42#	43	43	Nun's Priest's Tale	625	626	626
Friar .....	62#	64	64	Epilogue .....	...#	...#	16
Merchant .....	15	15	15	Physician's Tale..	285	286	286
Clerk .....	24#	24	24	Link .....	42	42	42
Man of Law ..	22	22	22	Pardoner's			
Franklin .....	30	30	30	Prologue .....	133	134	134
Craftsmen .....	18	18	18	Tale .....	508#	508#	506
Cook .....	9	9	9	Wife of Bath's			
Shipman .....	23	23	23	Prologue .....	863#	862#	856
Physician .....	34	34	34	Tale .....	410#	410#	408
Wife of Bath ..	32	32	32	Link .....	36#	36#	34
Parson .....	52	52	52	Friar's Tale .....	360#	364#	366
Plowman .....	13	13	13	Link .....	44	44	44
(Connective) ..	3	3	3	Summoner's Tale.	586	586	586
Miller .....	22	22	22	Link .....	56	56	56
Manciple .....	20	20	20	Clerk's Tale .....	1,156	1,156	1,156
Reeve .....	36	36	36	Host's Comment..	7	7	...#
Summoner .....	46	46	46	Link .....	32	32	32
Pardoner .....	46	46	46	Merchant's Tale ..	1,172#	1,170	1,174
Narrative, etc.	144	144	144	Epilogue .....	...	...	22
Knight's Tale...	2,196#	2,250	2,250	Squire's Prologue.	...#	...#	8
Link .....	76	76	78	Tale .....	658#	664	664
Miller's Tale....	660#	668	668	Words of the			
Link .....	66	66	66	Franklin .....	...#	36	36
Reeve's Tale .....	404	404	404	Franklin's			
Link .....	38#	40	40	Prologue .....	20	20	20
Cook's Tale .....	58	58	58	Tale .....	882#	898#	896
Link .....	98	98	98	Second Nun's			
Man of Law's				Prologue .....	119	119	119
Prologue .....	35	35	35	Tale .....	434	434	434
Tale .....	1,029	1,029	1,029	Canon's Yeoman's			
Link .....	...#	...#	28	Prologue .....	158#	164#	166
Shipman's Tale ..	436#	434	434	Tale .....	757#	760#	762
Link .....	18	18	18	Manciple's			
Prioress'				Prologue .....	104	120#	104
Prologue .....	35	35	35	Tale .....	257	258	258
Tale .....	203	203	203	Parson's Prologue	74	74	74
Link .....	21	21	21	Tale .....	...	...	...

The principal difference between the two Caxtons as regards order is in the F group. The textual differences are more marked. I give in Table II a list, in parallel columns, of the number of lines in Caxton I, Caxton II, and in the edition of Professor Skeat, with a few notes on special differences.

In some of these cases Caxton's second edition is fairly parallel with the best modern editions as represented by that of Skeat; while the first edition differs, textually, by the omission of a line or two. Such less important divergences—e. g., in the Nun's Priest's tale or the Physician's tale—I have not especially noted in this general and summary paper. But the apparent absence of a line, as in the description of the Monk in the Prologue, does not always mean merely that; nor does agreement in number of lines with the standard, as in the description of the Clerk, always mean textual agreement. I shall note here such differences as seem of interest, citing by the lines of the separate tales, that is, by those bracketed in Skeat's edition.

In the Prologue, the last few lines of the Prioress' description and the first few of the Monk's present in Caxton I this difference from Caxton II and from the standard:

Another nonne with hir ther was  
 Ful fair of hewe and bright of faas  
 That was her chapeleyn and prestis thre  
 A monk ther was fair for the maistre  
 Whiche afore that tyme hadde be  
 An out ryder he loued venore.<sup>1</sup>

This gives the description of the Prioress an additional line, and would do the same in that of the Monk but that ll. 197, 198 are omitted from the Prologue. The description of the Friar does not contain, in Caxton I, the two lines beginning "And yaf a certeyn ferme;" Caxton II has this couplet. In the description of the Clerk, Caxton I renders ll. 305 ff. as follows:

<sup>1</sup> Morell, in his edition of the Prologue and Knight's tale, 1737, again printed 1740, gives, in his list of "Various Readings," these six lines, marking them as from a Trinity College, Cambridge, manuscript. As he knew and used both the manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales* still at Trinity College—R, 3, 3 and R, 3, 15—this agreement in corruption with Caxton I may be examined into; and the agreement becomes still more interesting when we find Koch saying, on pp. li, lii, of his edition of the Pardoner's tale, that there is in the text of that tale a close correspondence between Caxton I and Trinity College R, 3, 15.

(l. 305 omitted)

Short and quyk and high of sentence

Sownyng moral vertu was his prudence

And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche

And therwith ful softe was his speche.

The result is the same number of lines as in Caxton II and the standard. In the description of the Pardoner, l. 672 reads in Caxton I:

Ful lowde he song com hidir lene grom ;

and the last two lines are :

To wynne siluer as he wel can

Therefore he song the merier than.<sup>1</sup>

Passing from the Prologue to the Tales, we find in the Knight's tale very noticeable differences, Caxton I omitting lines, transposing lines, and often distorting the text to absurdity. It omits ll. 290-303, jumping from the "sworn" at the end of l. 289 to the "sworn" of l. 303 to complete the couplet. Other omissions are ll. 335-42, 363-66, 735-44 (note the rime at beginning and end of the omitted passage), 1154-59, 1643, 1644, 1745, 1746, 1929-34 (note how the eye would travel from "Jupiter" to "Jupiter"), and 2041, 2042. The differences between the two Caxtons in points other than omissions are too numerous to be given here. But note l. 1419 with its "Theseus clothis" instead of "Th' encens the clothis," and the complete ruin of l. 925 in Caxton I, which changes Theseus' "eyen lighte" into "eyen blake & vglye," the rime-word next following being altered to "hye."

Caxton I several times alters or loses the rime-word; thus, l. 1164 is changed to ". . . with his owen hors," the rime disappearing. But if all the distortions of Caxton I in this Tale were here noted, this sketch would swell to a volume; and even a report of the frequent cases in which the first edition fuses two lines and inserts a verse, thus transforming the text without altering the number of lines or the trend of the narrative, would unduly expand this summary.

From the link, or Miller's prologue, both Caxtons omit ll. 47 and 48, as does Tyrwhitt. From the Miller's tale Caxton I omits ll. 579-86—eight verses. From the link between Reeve and

<sup>1</sup> This couplet, according to Morell, *loc. cit.*, reads similarly in the Trinity College MS.

Cook Caxton I drops out ll. 27, 28; in the introduction to the *Man of Law's* tale it renders the verse:

Though I come after hym with hawe-bake  
as

They I come aftir hym the whiche hath no lak.

Both Caxtons have the Squire following the *Man of Law*, as above noted, with the present Shipman's prologue introducing him; and the eight lines now used as Squire's prologue are not in either Caxton. The Shipman's tale has in Caxton I, after l. 316, two lines of obscenity not in Caxton II; and the earlier Caxton has similar passages in the Merchant's tale, as noted below.

From the "*Rime of Sir Thopas*" Caxton I omits ll. 31, 92, 110-13, and 176. It also twice fuses a short line, printed separately by Skeat, with the verse preceding—82 and 102. Caxton II omits l. 94; Professor Skeat remarks that most manuscripts do this, and that he supplies the line from MS Brit. Mus. Royal 17 D xv. Caxton I reads differently at this point, viz.:

(l. 93)  
For in that cuntre was ther noon  
Neither wyf ne child one  
That he had of any drede.

Caxton II, like Caxton I, fuses l. 82 with l. 81; but as in other cases of short lines it draws a bar and leaves a space, though without lining down, I have counted those instances as separate lines. Neither Caxton has the broken last line.

From the Monk's tale Caxton I omits the tragedies of Adam, Peter of Spain, and Peter of Cyprus; and, as already noted, the interruption to the Monk is made by the Host and not by the Knight; ll. 5-24 of this link are omitted.

The epilogue to the Nun's Priest's tale is absent from Caxton I, and is by Caxton II fused with the Manciple's prologue (see note below.)

The Pardoner's tale has in both Caxtons, after l. 159:

And ther fore sore repente him oughte  
Herodes who so wel the storyes seche  
There may ye lerne & by ensaumpyl seche  
(l. 161 follows),

thus adding two lines to the text.

The Wife of Bath's prologue has in both Caxtons the six lines printed by Skeat in a note;<sup>1</sup> Tyrwhitt and Skeat consider them genuine; Furnivall calls them spurious. Caxton I also inserts after l. 332 two verses not in Caxton II nor the standard. It further omits l. 197. Both Caxtons add to the tale, after l. 392:

And so they slepte tyl hit was morow gray  
And then she sayd when it was day.

In the Friar's prologue, after l. 30, both Caxtons insert the two lines which in Skeat appear as ll. 9 and 10 of the tale, but are not included in the tale by either Caxton. Caxton I also drops out ll. 229-32; note the jump from rime to rime.

Both Caxtons have after the Clerk's tale the seven lines of the "Verba Hospitis," as previously noted.

The Merchant's tale is in Caxton I defaced by two passages of obscenity—8 lines after vs. 1100,<sup>2</sup> and 4 more after l. 1132. Two more lines are inserted after l. 2366, but these 14 added lines are balanced by 16 of omission, 61-64, 402, 403, 683, 684, and 1036-43; note in this last the jump from rime to rime. Caxton II omits ll. 61, 62, 1120, 1121. The epilogue to the Merchant's tale is not in either Caxton; nor, as already noted, the 8 lines introductory to the Squire's tale.

Caxton I omits from the Squire's tale ll. 545-50, and has not the Words of the Franklin to the Squire. It also drops out of the Franklin's tale ll. 529-34, 727, 728, 735, 736, and 765-70 (note the jump from rime to rime). It inserts after l. 736, as does II:

And told hym alle the caas by and by  
How she had promysed ignorantly  
The squyer lyke as ye haue herd to fore (l. 738, etc.).

This gives Caxton II a couplet more than Skeat, while Caxton I has, to set off against the insertion, omissions amounting to 16 lines.

From the Canon's Yeoman's prologue both Caxtons omit ll. 69, 70, and from the tale both omit ll. 285, 286. In addition to this, Caxton I drops from the prologue ll. 151-56, and from the tale, ll. 234-36.

<sup>1</sup> *Oxford Chaucer*, Vol. V, pp. 292, 293.

<sup>2</sup> These are in Harley 1758, according to the *Six-Text Chaucer*, p. 475.



In the Manciple's prologue Caxton I agrees with modern editions, while Caxton II incorporates with it the 16 lines of the Nun's Priest's epilogue, wanting in Caxton I.<sup>1</sup>

One other parallelism may illustrate the next point which I wish to make, regarding the way in which the changes by Caxton II were carried out. I cite a few lines from the Prologue, putting the two texts side by side:

## CAXTON I

A knyght ther was a worthy man  
That fro the tyme he first began  
To riden out he loued chyualrye  
Trouthe and honour fredom and  
curtesye  
5 Ful worthy he was in his lordis  
werre  
And therto hadde he riden noman  
ferre  
And as well in cristendom as in  
hethenesse  
And euer hadde honour for his  
worthynesse  
At alisaundre he was whan it was  
wonne  
10 Ful ofte tyme he had the boord  
begonne  
Abouen alle nacions in pruce  
In lettowe hadde he reysed and in  
Ruse  
No cristen man so often tymes as he  
In granade at the sege eke hadde  
he be

## CAXTON II

A knyght ther was a worthy man  
That fro the tyme that he first began  
To ryden out / he loued chyualrye  
Trouthe & honour fredom and cur-  
tesye  
Ful worthy he was in his lordis  
werre  
And therto hadde he ryden noman  
ferre  
And as wel in crystendom as in  
hethenesse  
And euer hadde honour for hys  
worthynesse  
At alisaundre he was whan it was  
wonne  
Ful ofte tyme he hadde the boord  
begonne  
Abouen alle nacions in pruce  
In lettowe hadde he reysed and in  
Ruse  
No crysten manso often tymes as he  
Ingarnade at the sege eke hadde  
he be

<sup>1</sup> According to the *Six-Text Chaucer*, p. 301, and to Skeat, *Oxford Chaucer*, Vols. III, p. 433; IV, p. 289; V, 259, this epilogue occurs in but three manuscripts, in two of which it has as its last line (describing the Host):

"Seide vn-to a nother / as ye shuln heere."

The third of these manuscripts, now Add. 5140 of the British Museum, reads "the Nunne" instead of "another" in the line cited, and continues with six more verses introducing the Second Nun, whose tale then follows. In two other manuscripts, now belonging to Mr. Laurence Hodson, of Compton Hall, near Wolverhampton, notes upon which have been most generously furnished me by Mr. Hodson, this epilogue appears, and with it the six additional lines. These manuscripts are the recently discovered Hodson 39 and the manuscript formerly belonging to Sir Henry Ingilby, and known to Tyrwhitt as Askew I. The order of tales in both manuscripts is like the Ellesmere-Dd group, the [G] fragment "pushed down late," as Bradshaw termed it, after B<sup>2</sup>, with which these two manuscripts and Add. 5140 (formerly Askew II) connect it. Tyrwhitt pointed this out in a note on l. 15468, where "the six forged lines" are printed by him. The Hodson 39 lines are printed on p. 75 of the second Appendix to the *Six-Text*.

It should be remarked that of the five manuscripts showing this epilogue four are of

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>15 In algrith hadde he riden and in<br/>belmarie<br/>Atcartage was he and eke at satalye<br/>Whanne they were wonne and in<br/>the grete see<br/>At many at nobil aryue hadde be he<br/>At mortal bataillis had he be fiftene<br/>20 And foughte for oure feith at<br/>Tramysene<br/>In listis thries and hath sleyn his<br/>foo<br/>This ilke worthy knyght hadde be<br/>also<br/>Som tyme with the lord of Palathie<br/>Agayn another hethen man in Tur-<br/>kye<br/>25 And euermore he hadde a souerayn<br/>price<br/>And though he was worthy he was<br/>wise<br/>And of his port as meke as a mayde<br/>He neuer yet vilayns worde sayde<br/>In al his lif to nomaner wight<br/>30 He was a gentil parfight knyght<br/>For to telle you of his aray<br/>His hors were gode but he was not<br/>gay<br/>Of fustian he wered a gippioun<br/>Al be smered with his habergeon<br/>35 For he was late come fro his viage<br/>And sente for to do his pilgremage</p> | <p>At algezir / and ryden in Belmarie<br/>At leyeys was he and eke at Satalye<br/>Whan they were wonne and in the<br/>grete see<br/>At many at nobyl arme hadde be he<br/>At mortal batayllis had he be fyftene<br/>And foughte for our feith at Tramys-<br/>sene<br/>In listys thryes and ay sleyn hys foo<br/>Thys ylke worthy knyght hadde be<br/>also<br/>Som tyme with the lord of Palathye<br/>Agayn another hethen man in Tur-<br/>kye<br/>And euermore he hadde a souerayn<br/>prys<br/>And though he was worthy he was<br/>wys<br/>And of hys port as meke as a mayde<br/>He neuer yet no vylayne he sayde<br/>In al hys lyf vnto no maner wyght<br/>He was a very gentyl parfyght knyght<br/>For to telle you of hys aray<br/>Hys hors were good but he was not<br/>gay<br/>Of fustian he wered a gypion<br/>Al be smered wyth hys habergeon<br/>For he was late come fro hys vyage<br/>And sente for to do hys pylgremage</p> |
|---|--|

Space does not permit the multiplication of these extracts;

the "Ellesmere-Dd" group, which, among its other peculiarities, cuts out the Man of Law's end-link; of these four, all but the Dd show here the word "Nunne" instead of "another," and have six additional lines bringing forward the Second Nun, whose tale follows in all four. The fifth manuscript, Royal 17 D xv, is not of the Ellesmere group; but though its Squire's tale follows the Man of Law, its Man of Law's end-link introduces the Sompnour; this fifth manuscript thus differs from the archetype of Caxton II, though it agrees with Caxton II at the end of the Nun's Priest's tale in showing the epilogue without any spurious lines, and with the Manciple's tale following. Such differences illustrate again the necessity for study of the links, and the strong probability that many existing manuscripts of the *Tales* may be mosaics, their separate fascicules derived from different sources.

The Chaucer Society's three prints of the epilogue, which reproduce from Add. 5140 only a sufficient number of lines to form a parallel to the Dd, and which do not make clear just what manuscript is meant by the bracketed notes, have misled Professor Skeat into his treatment of the Add. MS as "absurd" (*Oxford Chaucer*, Vol. V, p. 259). Tyrwhitt, who used the manuscripts themselves, had expressly stated the facts regarding the codex; and the Chaucer Society's "Trial Tables," issued with Part I of the *Six-Text*, show that in the Add. MS Group G, and not Group H, follows. The bracketed note under the Add. extract, p. 301 of the *Six-Text*, refers to the Hengwrt MS, whose gaps the Add. is used to supply.

but from such examination as I have been able to give the two Caxtons much the same method has appeared. Caxton himself says in his "prohemye" that the loaned manuscript had served him as a standard "by which I haue corrected my book/as here after alle along;" and, looking at the description of the Knight above printed, we see a justification of his statement. What we consider blemishes are unremoved; the "sente" of the last line and the "at" of l. 18 remain in the second edition; and the other differences are in the main only the insertion of "that" in l. 2, the alteration of proper names in ll. 15 and 16, the change of "hath" to "ay" in l. 21, the reform of l. 28, and the insertion of "very" in l. 30. Otherwise the two texts correspond closely, even in the spelling; Caxton II keeps, for instance, the variation between the rime-words in ll. 11 and 12; and though it substitutes *y* pretty frequently for *i*, its resemblance to Caxton I is so strong that we cannot think the later print set up independently of the earlier. This, as observed, bears out his own statement. And as for the retention of what we call blemishes, no mediæval editor considered that literal fidelity to his original formed part of his duty. For Caxton the essential thing was, as he himself says, the printing of all that Chaucer had said, the excision of what he had not said; and in these respects Caxton's aroused editorial conscience probably kept his second print quite closely to his new manuscript.

Professor Koch finds in the Pardoner's prologue and tale proof of the same "correction all along" in Caxton II by a manuscript of another type than Caxton I, while Caxton I served substantially as basis for the new edition. However, despite the use of the earlier print in setting up the second text, we cannot regard Caxton II as the mere descendant of Caxton I; nor can we treat it as of the same subclass, considering the differences which exist between them as wholes. It seems to belong, with Caxton I, to that general class of manuscripts in which Man of Law is bound to Squire—a class in which there must be several subdivisions, one of which shows the manifold errors grouped by Bradshaw as his Type I, and two others of which are represented by the two Caxtons. The manuscript loaned to Caxton for his second edition

had received additions not in the earlier recension; the Franklin's tale had been connected with that of the Squire, the link after the Monk's tale had been revised,<sup>1</sup> and the epilogue to the Nun's Priest's tale added.<sup>2</sup> We may perhaps infer from these additions that the manuscript of Caxton II, while deriving, as regards arrangement, from the same archetype as the debased and careless Caxton I, was copied at a somewhat later date. That it belonged to "the A type,"<sup>3</sup> or Ellesmere group, as a whole, we have as yet no proof; indeed, the evidence thus far is against that supposition.

Inferences of this sort are tempting to students of the chronology of Chaucer's writings; and, indeed, the manuscripts and early prints have their contribution to make, not only to theories of the genealogy of texts, but also to those of the development of Chaucer's art. Even a brief examination of the available evidence shows that neither of these problems is a settled or a simple question. If we observe, for example, the fact that the de Worde print of the *Tales* of 1498, while displaying superficially the order as seen in Harley 7334, has the Man of Law's end-link introducing the Squire, like the Caxtons, and presents no major textual agreements with the Harley, we may again conjecture the extent to which contamination was possible in a large fascicular work like the *Canterbury Tales*, and the complexity of the problem still before students. In the discussion of the genealogy of the *Canterbury Tales* manuscripts, as in that of the chronology of Chaucer's writings, the "guesses and combinations of philologists are fast hardening into dogmas," while a mass of evidence remains unused. When the contents of every manuscript have been examined in detail, the links printed in full from every manuscript, the comparative study of the single texts carried out with comparative study of each entire codex as a part of the evidence, then the genealogy of the manuscripts may be more safely dis-

<sup>1</sup> We can hardly opine that Caxton I cut out ll. 5-24 and the name of the Knight for uniformity's sake; its omissions throughout are those of error, often a jump from rime to rime, and there is no such extensive manipulation as this would indicate.

<sup>2</sup> In this connection we may remark that ten Brink (*History of English Literature*, Vol. II, p. 179) considered that the B<sup>2</sup> fragment "unmistakably belongs to the parts composed toward the end of the whole collection."

<sup>3</sup> Koch, *loc. cit.*, p. lii.

cussed. Until that time arrives, the accumulation of bibliographical and paleographical data, and the publication of facsimiles or diplomatic prints, are of more value than continued "critical" editing and deduction upon the basis of the small portion of material yet accessible to students. In the prosecution of our work on Chaucer, we must recognize the truth of Matthew Arnold's words: "Far more mistakes come from want of fresh knowledge than from want of correct reasoning."

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